

316 (16) THE
PURITAN CONVERT,

Not to Prelatick Protestantism, and yet to Prelatick Protestantism; nor to Popery, and yet to Popery; but absolutely, and without Reserve, to Apostolical Christianity: That is, to whatsoever Doctrine or practice, Prelatick Protestant or Papist can prove, to have been taught the World by the Apostles of Jesus Christ.

O R, A
DISCOURSE

By way of a
L E T T E R :

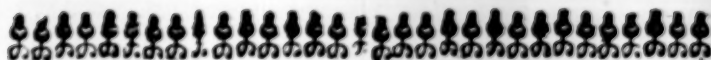
Shewing,

That Prelatick Protestants, if they will be true to their Practices and Principles, have all reason to turn Papists, in all things as to what Papists indeed hold; but in nothing as to what Papists are vulgarly believed to hold: And that *de facto* Non-conformists would turn Papists, were they not imposed upon by false Principles, and notorious Slanders, devised by the first Separatists from the Church of Rome. By W. H.

Come and I will teach you how great things God has done for my Soul.

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Permissu Superiorum.



The First Letter.

*What the Author means by a Prelatick Protestant,
Puritan, &c.*

My Dearest Friends and Nearest Relations,

IT is my hearts desire to speak with every one of you; and to tell you with all Sincerity, what the All Good God has done for my Poor Soul; but the troublefomness of the times, and your great distance from one another, not permitting me so great a comfort; I have thought fit to communicate to you my good Wishes of your Eternal Happiness by Ink and Paper. Our dear Redeemer, Jesus Christ, Bless my Poor Labours to you all, and stir up others, who are better able, more fully to instruct you in the way to Everlasting Bliss; which I know to be the great desire of your Souls. After the search of many years spent in Prayer, Reading, and conference with Persons of different persuasions, I doubt not but I have found out the Truth: Almighty God be forever Blessed for it. I doubt not but I have found out the True Church of Jesus Christ, the indeed People of God, who walk in the direct Path to endless Beatitude; and whosoever walks, as they walk, and teach, shall infallibly see God for ever. I confess, I am Converted from Puritanism: But, to what? to Prelatick Protestantism? No; nor to Popery neither: But to Ancient Apostolick Christianity. Though indeed, I have not so much left Puritanism, as Prelaticks call it, as added thereto it; wherein I found it (and I hope many of you will find it) come short of the Holy Apostles Doctrine, and Institutions. That you may the better understand me in my ensuing Discourse, I will briefly Explain to you, what I understand by a Puritan, what by a Prelatick Protestant, and what by a Papist, and what by an Apostolick Christian,

Christian, which I profess my self, by the Grace of Jesus Christ, to be.

I understand by a Puritan, one that being Visited from Heaven by rousing checks of Conscience, could find no Rest for their troubled Soul, by living under the lifeless Ministry, and Spiritless form of the established Religion of England. One, who by reading some portion of Holy Scripture, or other Spiritual Book, or by hearing some awakening Sermon, was so struck from above, that he had nothing in his Heart nor Mouth, but that great Question of the man concern : *Sirs, What must I do to be Saved?* One, who from the Visitation from on high, had so much life in him, as to be sensible of the heavy burden of a hard Heart; and whose great Prayer to the Almighty was, To take from him his Heart of Stone, and to give him a Heart of Flesh. No Books, no Company, no Sermons, no Thoughts were gussful to him, but such as were conducing to the melting and changing of his Heart and Soul. All Lip-labour he deem'd but lost Labour, so long as his Soul within was not chang'd; so long as his Heart was hard, he could find no satisfaction in words and expressions, though never so Pathetical, whether uttered by himself, or others, or set down in Printed Books : Nay, he was so far from being satisfied with such wordy Devotions, that he was even afraid to use them, for fear of being guilty of damnable Hypocrisy. For Example, to say, or read by way of Prayer; O my God, my All! How I love you! How my Soul is grieved that ever I have offended you! his Conscience telling him, he had no such Affections, but that his Heart was hard as a very Stone. No relenting of hearty sorrow for past iniquities; no tender resentments of the innumerable Divine Benefits; no strong hopes of future Eternal Goods; nor yet affrighting fears of the dreadful day of wrath; Conscious to himself of a great deal of ill past, and clear conviction of no present good disposition in his Soul, and yet assuredly persuaded there must some good be in the Soul, or no hopes of enjoying the Almighty for ever; without holiness, true Internal Holiness, Heart-Holiness, Spirit-Holiness in this life, no hopes of seeing the All Good God in the next. And thus much of a Puritan, I think none that has any sense of a God can mislike, of whatsoever persuasion he is, whether he be Papist, Protestant, or Phanarick. I do not use these terms to revile, or exasperate any one; but merely for distinction sake. And I beseech my Reader not to be offended at them, if he meet with them now and then in my following Discourse.

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God forbid, I should willingly anger those wounds, which with my Soul I desire to cure.

But what do I understand further by a Puritan? I understand one, who wearied out with wrastling against the corruptions of his own Heart, still finds much evil in the interior of his Soul, boylings of anger, flames of concupiscence, greedy desires of Money, and the things of this life; and however exteriorly reformed and changed he may seem to be to the World, he's dissatisfied within himself, that he is not changed enough; not changed enough, I say; although his profane Kindred and acquaintance, think him changed but too too much; because he will not, nor dare not Revel it with them as formerly. Instead of Plays, and Comedies, his entertainments now are the Holy Scriptures, or other good Books, written by such who experimented in their own Souls, what they taught others; the works rather of Pious Mens Hearts, than of Learned Mens Brains. Whilst his Companions are roaring and rallying in Tipling Houses and Taverns, he's sighing, and groaning in his Bed-chamber, or Closet; wrastling with his offended God by hearty Prayers, according to what most presses his wounded and afflicted Spirit. He dares not lye, he abhors an Oath as Hell; he is afraid to cheat or cozen any he deals with; though he finds to his grief, but too great desires of worldly wealth in the bottom of his Heart. Upon days set apart for the Divine Worship, he wishes he could keep his Soul wholly fixed upon God. He can by no means satisfy his Conscience, by bearing a part with his Lips only in any forms of Prayer, though in themselves never so holy and good, for an hour or two, and then to spend, or rather waste the rest of the day in idle talk, disports and pastimes, or somewhat worse, Dalliances, Revels, &c. But his employment is to lay up a stock of provision for his poor Soul to live upon all the week after. Then he labours to renew his first repentant sorrow for his life past, and so confirm his weak resolutions of another kind of life for the time to come, &c.

But what hurt in all this? if this be to be a Puritan, would to God all the world were Puritans. What need of such a Mans Conversion? Whither must he turn? What must he change to? unless it be from better to worse. But may he not change from good to better? why, what's wanting in him? That you shall hear by and by. Only take notice for the present, That I am so far from being Converted from thus much of a Puritan, that I most heartily wish I could Convert all the World unto it. The poor afflicted Puritan,
sadly,

fully, and deservedly affrighted with the fear and apprehension of Eternal damnation, labours and works how he may avoid it: And resting in the Holy Scripture those words of our Blessed Saviour; *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you*: And seeing a necessity of some righteousness or other to entitle him to Heaven, and finding nothing in himself but sin and wickedness; and having heard much talk of the righteousness of Christ, and of being saved by his Righteousness, and finding some places in the Epistles of St. Paul, which seem to sound that way, all his care is to apprehend that Righteousness, and to rely upon what Jesus Christ has done and suffer'd for him: And by this means he begins to deem himself in a secure condition. By the Blood of Christ thus apprehended and applied by a lively Faith, he grows very confident and assured, all the fire of Hell is quenched as to him, and he fears damnation no longer: And though unworthy of his Heavenly Fathers Benediction for any thing in himself, yet appearing before him in the Garments of his Elder Brother, he doubts not of a Blessing, and that an Eternal one too. And this conceit if it do not make him very bold to sin, at least it makes him very negligent in adorning his Soul with Piety, Charity, Meekness, Patience, Humility, and other Christian Vertues; partly thinking them impossible to be attained; partly deeming there is no absolute necessity of them to his Salvation: He having nothing to do, but to believe that Jesus Christ has done all for him, and what Love, or Piety, or other Vertue necessarily follows from such a Faith, he willingly admits: but for the rest, solicitously to endeavour after the acquisition of Vertues, he looks upon as the working of an Old Testament Spirit, and a derogation from the perfect Salvation by Jesus Christ, and his Righteousness. The Old Covenant was, *Do this and Live*; but now he is under a better Covenant, *Believe and Live, or Live and do this*. The impression his first awakening has left upon him, keeps him from returning to open lewdness and profaness; but his Faith of this imputative Righteousness of Christ, makes him take little pains in the cultivating of his own Soul, either in purging it of the Relicks of ill habits, or in planting in it the Divine Vertues, our Lord Jesus taught us to exercise, by his Word and Example. And this is our Puritans first mistake; and a dangerous one too, as I shall show afterwards.

His next mistake is; he begins to quarrel with all Exterior Worship and Ceremonies. And he falls into this mistake by reflecting upon his own Experience, as having reaped no benefit by forms of Prayer,

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by Bowing at the Name of Jesus; by looking upon certain days as Holy-days, and Fasting-days, &c. Hence he begins to think, all such Observances are wholly useless and unprofitable, if not abominable and superstitious besides. And he is much confirmed in this his Imagination, by considering the open profaness, and little sense of God, he observes generally in zealous Conformists. Moreover, on the other side, he takes notice of his Brethren Non-Conformists, that they are generally free from open and scandalous sins, and at least sigh and breath after Interior Spirit and Devotion, which certainly must be that must give us a Title to Heaven, rather than a few cringes, or Exterior Verbal Devotions, which any one, though never so Profane, may easily exercise; and indeed he sees with his Eyes many do Exercise, who give no Testimony at all of any work of Regeneration in their Hearts; but by their profane, light, and vain Conversation, give too clear evidences of their being still in their natural unregenerate condition. And accordingly their Preachers in their Sermons have little life or zeal; and seldom discourse of such Truths, as are apt to awaken Mens Consciences, and make them lay to Heart the great concern of the Salvation of their Souls: Or if they do at any time Preach of Judgment, or Hell; Repentance, or a New Life; they do it very coldly and imperfectly, and seem to talk like Parrots what they have learnt by rote, and out of others Books, and not what they have had any Experience of in their own Hearts. Such Reflections, joyn'd with some places of the New Testament not rightly understood, make him think, that whatsoever was pleasing to Almighty God, or profitable to the Jewish People under Moses; Now we that are under the Gospel, must be Spiritual Worshippers, if we will be Worshipers in Truth; and must cast away all Exterior forms of words, and outward observances of days and places, as hindrances to True Spiritual Gospel-worship. And all agreeing, that the Body of the *Mosaic* Law is abolished, with its Priesthood, Sacrifices, special Garments in time of Divine Worship, particular days to be kept Holy, &c. This being confessed by all, as well Protestants as Papists, and finding no clear express mention in the New Testament of any Exterior Rites, (except a very few) appointed by our Blessed Saviour; or his Apostles; no Holy-days, nor Fasting-days, no particular Garments for Priests, no set forms of Prayer for them, or the people, except one little short one, commonly called *Our Lords Prayer*; and deeming that the New Testament was written to instruct us Christians in the whole Body of Gospel-worship,

as the Old Testament was written to instruct the *Jews* in the *Mosaic* manner of Service: Our well-meaning Puritan makes no doubt, but all *Ember-days*, *Vigils*, *Leut-Fast*, *Christmas-day*, *Good-Friday*, *Ascension*, *Whitsontide*, &c. are meer humane Inventions, a meer Will-worship; the blind observers whereof can expect no other reward, at the day of Account, but that sharp check; Who has required these things at your hands? instead of a, well done Good and Faithful Servant, enter into the Joy of thy Lord, which they vainly expected for a toilsom observance of a company of burdensome Ceremonies of their own devising. And this I understand by a Puritan.

By a Prelatick Protestant, I understand one, who agrees with the Puritan in this, that he expects Salvation by the extrinsecal Righteousness of Christ without him, not by any interior Righteousness within his own Soul. Though some of the Prelatick Clergy begin to scoff at the Doctrine of Imputative Justice. One of them lately in a Sermon before His Majesty, called it, and not improperly, *The Mummery of Imputative Justice*. As if he would tell us, that an Imputative Holy Man, is a meer Christmas Mummer, who to little Boys and Girls seems a Prince in his assumed Bravery; but Persons of years and understanding, see under his borrow'd Regal Attire, a poor Cocker, or sorry Botcher; or like the Daw in the Fable, who had made himself very gay with the fine Feathers he had stoln from other Birds; but when each Bird, being to appear before their King in their proper Array, snatcht back their stoln Feathers; the poor Daw, that had made himself fine with anothers Bravery, became the common object of scorn and laughter. Such will be the sad Lot of meerly Imputative Saints, who to themselves, and their Brethren, seem very fine, in the extrinsecal Righteousness of Christ, put on by their Phantastical Faith, whilst God and his Angels, under all this conceited, assumed Bravery, see a lascivious, wanton, or a covetous Miser. But if the Prelatick Protestant and Puritan agree in the Doctrine of Imputative Justice, wherein do they differ? Has the Prelatick Protestant no terrors of Conscience upon him, as well as the Puritan? Generally speaking, Prelatick Protestants (I wish it were a slander) are very profane, and give no signs of any Interior trouble of Conscience. And if any of them begin to be heartily troubled for his sins, he is observed either to turn Fanatick, or Papist; that is, either to practise what he professes, as to Holy-days, and Fasting-days, Confession of sins to a Priest, and such like Rites, wherein he agrees with the Church of *Rome*; or else to turn Fanatick,

rick, and scoff at all such observances, as Legal, mimical, and superstitious. But whilst he continues Protestant, in what differs he from the Puritan? why, he is very angry with the Puritan, that he will not abstain from Flesh in *Lent*, upon *Fridays*, *Ember-days*, and *Vigils* of Saints: Though practically speaking, nobody takes less notice of them than himself: Only on the *Sunday* before, as the publick Minister of the Great God in *Pontificalibus*, in time of Divine Service, he advertiseth the people of such and such days of Abstinence, and Fasting, as occur: And the poor Puritan, because he will not solemnly invite the people to observe, what himself never intends to take the least notice of, must for this be silenced, and suspended both from Office and Benefice. Again, the Prelatick Protestant, he wonders the Puritan should scruple the Adorning the Communion Table with two Wax Tapers, thereby to proclaim before God and Man, that he is of that Church, which in the Primitive times for fear of persecution, serv'd God Almighty by Candle-light in Dens and Caves. And the simple Puritan thinks it all one ridiculous, to have Candles upon his Table, at noon day unlighted, as lighted; Nay, of the two, it seems to him greater non-sence to have them unlighted. For that the Papists who light them, may pretend Ornament and Increase of Splendor: But to have them there, and not to light them, no account can be given, unless it be for that it is less expensive. Moreover, the Prelatick Protestant wonders, what hurt the Puritan can see in making the Sign of the Cross, upon the Fore-head of a new Baptiz'd Infant; though even he smiles at a Papist, when he makes it upon himself, or his Victuals; which the Puritan can by no means understand. If our Lord Jesus, says the *Non-Conformist*, would have Christians Cross their Children, in memory of his dying upon a Cross; I cannot think it credible, that he should prohibit them to Cross themselves, upon the same account. Or if he must be wiser above what is written, he thinks he may as well credit the Papist, who says, He has a Tradition for Crossing himself; as the Bishop, who says he has a Tradition for Crossing his Children. The Prelatick Protestant wonders the Puritan can doubt, the Holy Eucharist (as he begins to call it) is really and truly the Body of Christ? since our Blessed Lord says so plainly of it, at his last Supper, *This is my Body*. Why then should any one doubt of the Real Presence of our Saviours Body, where himself says it to be? Or why should any one refuse to Adore upon his Knees his Blessed Saviour, under whatsoever form or shape, he shall please to represent himself unto him; provided it be

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himself really, truly and indeed, as here none can doubt him to be, having his own infallible word for it. And why he may not appear to us in the form of Bread, after his Ascension, as well as he appeared to St. *Mary Magdalen* in the shape of a Gardiner, after his Resurrection, *M. Thorndike* cannot understand. Nay, *Dr. Cosins* in his History of Transubstantiation goes yet further, and says, *Pag. 44. It is not questioned, whether the Body of Christ be absent from the Sacrament, duly Administred according to his Institution, which we Protestants neither affirm nor believe: For it being given and received in the Communion, it must needs be that it is present, though in some manner veiled under the Sacrament; so that of it self it cannot be seen.* And *Pag. 117. Protestants do freely grant, and firmly believe, That the Wine (as hath often been said) is changed into the Blood of Christ; but every change is not a Transubstantiation.* Now the Puritan wonders how any of this belief can boggle at the Popish Transubstantiation, or change of Bread, in the Holy Communion, into Christs Body. If there be no change at all made in the Bread and Wine, says the Puritan, either by Prelatical, or Popish Consecration; without all peradventure there can be no Real Presence of Christs Body. The same remaining the same, without any change, must needs be the same. But if there be any change made; in Accidents, its evident there's none; our Senses, and all Popish Doctors confessing as much. If therefore there be any change, it must be in the substances of Bread and Wine; and if so, what can such a Change be more properly called, than Transubstantiation? or the change of the substances of Bread and Wine, into the substance of our Blessed Saviours Body and Blood, the accidents of figure, taste, and colour remaining unaltered? The Prelarick Protestant wonders, that the Puritan, when he is going out of this World, should find difficulty to make a particular Confession of his sins, in any grievous matter lye upon his Conscience; and humbly desire the Prelarick Priests Absolution, saying over him after his special Confession: *By the Authority of Jesus Christ committed to me, I Absolve thee from thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* The Puritan replies; if Jesus Christ has Instituted any such Ordinance, he sees not why every one should not frequent it every year, or as often as he finds himself conscious of any heynous crime with the Papist. — But Jesus Christ having Instituted no such Right or Sacrament, he wonders any dare be so bold to press it upon any Christian living, or dying; and indeed least of all dying: when sure, if ever, we ought to have a care, not to seek to please

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Almighty God, by unprescribed Will-worship, or Inventions of our own. Moreover, the Prelatick Protestant wonders at the Puritans Niceness, that he can by no means be perswaded to Bow at the Sacred Name of Jesus; when Nature teaches us a Relative Reverence to any thing that has a Relative Respect to a Person whom we Honour: Every one without scruple standing bare in the *Presence-Chamber*; nor does any one pass the Kings Chair of State without a Reverend Bow, whether His Majesty be there or no. And the simple Puritan deems it as gross Idolatry to worship Sounds, as Colours; Names, as Pictures; and stranges, that any one who does so superstitiously cringe and bow at the Name of *Jesus*, should smile at a Papist for respectfully putting off his Hat, when he passes by the Picture of the same *Jesus*. The sound of the Name of *Jesus* being vanish'd and gone, before the superstitious Worshipper can make his Mimical Congy, whereas the Picture, a far more lively Representation of the same Great Lord is permanent, and remains to receive its Devout Reverers Relative Respect. The *Conformist* wonders what there is in a decent White Surplice, that should boggle the skewish Puritan: And the Puritan admires how any one can think a Surplice should become a publick Minister of the Divine Worship, and yet throw away, as Babylonish Rags, the Popish Girdle, Stole, and Casuble, which add Splendor and Decency to the same unwritten superstitious Garb, unless it be because they are more chargable. The *Conformist* wonders at the Puritans scrupulosity, that he cannot say *Amen*, to that Prayer in the Burial of the Dead: That we with this our Brother, and all other departed in the true Faith of thy Holy Name, may have our perfect Consummation and Bliss, both in Body and Soul, &c. *We must pray for the Dead*, says the Rector of *St. Martins in Oxford*, in his Sermon called the *Schismatical Puritan*. *Thy Kingdom come O Lord raise the dead Prisoners in the Grave. And herein we pray for their Souls and Bodies. God be with them to comfort their Souls deprived of their Bodies.* And to the Puritan this seems plain Popery. In fine, the Prelatick Protestant wonders at the Puritans pride, that he will not submit his Judgment in matters of Faith, to the determination of a Council of all the Reverend Bishops of the Land, His Majesty as supreme Head and Governor presiding: And the Puritan is amazed, that if we may pin our Faith upon another mans sleeve, & safely believe, as a particular Church in *England* believes; how it can be unsafe to submit ones judgment to the determination of a General Council of all the Learned Bishops of the Christian world, his Holiness the Pope as supreme Pastor presiding, & believe as the Universal Church of Christ believes. 'Tis

sitting, says the Conformist, that for order sake, in Christs Church there should be in every Nation some supreme Governors, to whose Directions, in matters of Divine Worship, all should submit, else we shall have as many Christian Religions, and ways of Worship, as there are Parishes; nay, as there are private Families, or particular Persons. The Puritan replies; if we must conclude our Lord Jesus governs his Church, as our reason tells us it's fitting he should, for Union, Decency, and Order govern it, and not according to the infallible written Rule of the New Testament: If the Case be this; It seems to him as rational, that he should for the same Reasons of conserving Union, Decency and Order in his Church appoint one supreme Pastor over all Christians dispersed in all the Nations of the World, whom all should obey in the vacancy of General Councils, for fear forsooth otherwise, there should be as many ways of Christian Worship, as there are several Christian Kingdoms, or Commonwealths. I speak not this to revile the established Religion of the Nation, but to excite the Professors of it to observe devoutly, what they Christianly profess, as to Holy-days, *Lent, Fridays*, and other Fasting-days, Confession of sins to a Priest, and other Holy and Profitable Rites, when Piously, and Reverently performed, and by which they are distinguished from Non-conformists.

And by this time I hope, *My Dearest Relations*, you understand what I mean by a Prelatick Protestant. But what do I understand by *Popery*, and a *Papist*? Why what should I understand by a Papist, but what the generality of people understand by a Papist; Those things we call Stones, which every body commonly speaking calls Stones; and so I understand by Popery and a Papist, what every body commonly speaking calls a Papist and Pope: y. By a Papist then I understand one, that worships Stocks and Stones, Metals, and Pictures of Jesus Christ, and the Virgin Mary, and other Saints, as Gods, and consequently prays to them, and puts his whole confidence in them; as the ancient Heathens did in their dumb Idols of *Jupiter, Mars, and Venus*, &c. I say one that worships Pictures of Jesus Christ, as Gods: Not barely one that has such Pictures, and for pious purposes, also, for that Prelatick Protestants have as well as they. Protestants have Pictures of Jesus Christ and his Holy Mother, not only in their private Houses, and publick Churches, but even their very Common Prayer Books are full of them in the last Impression, to excite in the Beholders mind a lively apprehension of our Blessed Saviours life and death. Nor can I think, they that are

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so ceremonious in devoutly Bowing, when they hear the Holy Name of their Saviour Jesus, can forbear in some devout fit, especially those of the tenderer Sex, from kissing the Picture of their same dearest Lord. But here's the difference betwixt them and the Dutch Papist: That the Papist Bows at the Name of Jesus, and kisses his Picture, with a design to give Divine Honour to the very Name and Picture; but our Prelatick Protestant does the same thing, intending only to give them civil respect, as he would give to the Name or Picture of his King. Furthermore a Papist is one that believes the Pope can give him leave to commit any sin for Money; or if any one were so bold to commit the sin before he got leave to commit it; 'tis but giving so much Money, and the same Holy Indulgent Father can so perfectly pardon your sin, as you shall not be in the least danger of any punishment for it, Temporal or Eternal, in Purgatory or in Hell: And all this, though you have no purpose at all to forsake your sin. And this his Holy Father can do by a plenitude of Power, which he has of disposing and applying to whom he pleases, penitent or not penitent, the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ our Blessed Saviour and his Millions of Saints, of all whose merits the Pope is supreme Lord to dispose of them to the living or dead, as he by his unerring Spirit thinks fitting. I say to the living or dead? For this Papist believes, that the Pope can free, what Souls out of Purgatory he pleases, paying their debts for which they are there in prison, out of the stock of the supererogatory works of Saints: Always provided that in lieu or rather purchase of so great a favour, some of the deceased parties friends give a large alms to his Holiness. Moreover, the Papist Honours the Virgin *Mary* much more than he does her Divine Son or God the Father; and therefore for one Prayer he makes to God, he says ten to the Holy Virgin. But alas what are his Prayers? A company of Latin words he neither understands, nor cares to understand, which if he do but utter over in such a number, though his mind and heart be wholly taken up with worldly thoughts and desires, he thinks he has done such a meritorious work, as God almighty is obliged for the great Honour he has done him to give him Eternal Happiness. If he do but believe as his Churchmen believe, though he be wholly ignorant of their Belief, his Soul is safe enough.

Besides, he makes not only Gods of Holy Men departed, but even of sinful Men whilst they live. Hence he makes less scruple of breaking Gods Laws, than he does of violating any Ordinance of the Pope.

Pope, or any Law of his Church. He must by no means touch the least bit of Flesh on a Fasting-day, against his Church's Law, upon pain of damnation; but if he commit Fornication, 'tis but a Venial sin, and sprinkling himself with a little Holy Water, he's as pure from all spot as a new Baptiz'd Infant. And as for obedience to Magistrates, if they be not of his Religion, he owes them no Allegiance: And if he have by Oath obliged himself, he has a Holy Father can dispense with him for that or any other Oath for a piece of Money. If his Prince persecute him for his Religion, let him but have so much desperate courage to Sacrifice his own life, to Strab or Poison his said Persecutor, he shall at *Rome* be Canoniz'd for a Saint. Nor can private persons expect any fidelity from him, when he is thus traiterously rebellious against his Liege Lord and Soverain. Therefore whatsoever promise he has made to an Heretick, he may lawfully break it, and cheat and cozen him without any scruple: Nay, need make no more difficulty of killing an Heretick, than of a common Highway Man. As for Fasting and Mortification, if he but abstain from Flesh, though he drink all day long the best Wines he can get, till himself at noon with all variety of Fish, and stuff himself again at night with all sorts of Sweet-meats, he has like a good Christian piously and sorrowfully commemorated the bitter death and passion of his dear Redeemer; he has done a work of a strange force to satisfy for his sins, to suppress his corrupt inclinations, to elevate his mind to Heaven, to cast out the Devil, to obtain the Holy Ghost for himself or others. As for Virginal Purity, if he do but make a Vow of Chastity, and keep himself from Marriage, though he be as familiar with Nunns as Lay People are with their lawful Wives; he is one of the Virgins in the Mytical Book of St. *John*, who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. As to Pardons & Indulgences 'tis wonderful what he believes. For a round Sum of Money paid to his Holy Father the Pope, he can purchase a Pardon for himself, and his Heirs for ever, for whatsoever sins he or they may possibly commit. Sins that are to be committed by himself twenty years hence, or by his Posterity a hundred years hence, he has a Pardon for them already in his Pocket, under the Broad Seal of Christs Vicar upon Earth: which our Lord Jesus neither can nor will deny, but has engaged his infallible word to ratifie and confirm and all this, though the Persons who have obtained this Pardon or Indulgence should chance to dye without the least Remorse or Repentance for their sins. And by this the World is taught to understand what a Blessing it is to have a great Estate, for that Rich Men who

who have but Money to purchase one of those Pardons, can never fail of Heaven; whereas the Poor, and those of slender Fortunes, for want of them, must be hurried away into Eternal Misery, without Bail or Mainprize. Moreover, by vertue of these Pardons, they have leave to commit all manner of villanies without sin, or at least without any danger of receiving any prejudice by sin, These Papists they'll tell you indeed, their Church is a Holy Church, and has all means imaginable to suppress vice, and encourage to sanctity. They have a Hell to set before audacious sinners, to terrifie them from committing mortal and grievous offences, and they have a Purgatory with which they threaten lesser offenders. But in very deed both their Hell and their Purgatory, are so easily avoided by any one that has a little Money, that he must be one that startles at his own shadow, that can at all be terrified by either. For had you committed all kinds of sins imaginable, if you have but the Impudence to tell your Ghostly Father all those villanies in his Ear, though you be so far from resolving to amend, as you secretly purpose when you have clear'd the old, to begin a new score, provided you do but profess to your said Confessor, that you are sorry and say you will amend, he by three or four words in Latin, *Ego te Absolvo*, &c. By the Authority of Jesus Christ I Absolve thee from thy sins; does as perfectly free you from all obligation to Eternal Torments, as if you had never sinn'd. And as for the temporal pains in Purgatory, which may be due to you for want of a true sorrow, and a hearty purpose to amend, 'tis but saying Seven *Pater Nosters*, and as many *Ave Marias*, upon such a Saints day in such a Church, and you go straight to Heaven clear from all spot and stain. There are many more ridiculous absurdities which this sally deluded Papist believes and practises, but these I think are sufficient to make any Man in his wits to abhor Popery as the greatest piece of Non-sense imaginable. And understanding by Popery, what has been said (and yet that is not half of that Ridiculousity, which the Generality of people in England understand by it) he that should turn Papist, be he for Religion, Protestant, Jew or Turk he must certainly for understanding be a Mad Man, Child or Fool, either one that has lost his wits, or one that is not yet come to his wits, or one that never had; nor ever shall have any wit.

But we e not our Ancestors here in England for many ages together all Papists? Are not whole Nations, *France, Spain, Italy* and others generally Papists? Have we not some thousands of Papists still remaining

remaining in our own Country. Are all these Children, Fools or Mad Men? Let them look to that. You and I are sure that no Man that has half the understanding of a Man, can think that such a bundle of ridiculous Tenets and Absurdities, can look like any such thing as a Religion revealed from Heaven: And if they confesse themselves to be Papists, and to hold those witless absurdities; the Conclusion unavoidably falls upon them. They must be Children, Mad Men, or Fools. Unless you will say, they know well enough all those ridiculous absurdities, how irrational and senseless they are, as well as you and I; but for temporal ends, in their Hearts being of no Religion at all, they make a profession of believing and revering all the above-mentioned Fopperies. And this I must confesse is another strange folly in these Papists, and a contradiction not to be parallel'd in the most blockish uncultivated *Indians*. For the Happiness, Riches, Honours and Pleasures of this life, they make a show of believing most seriously a thousand absurdities, which they laugh at in their Hearts; and yet they are so senseless, as they'll loose their Lives, Estates, Dignities and all, rather than abjure those very absurdities. Further, They are so ashamed of their doltish Religion, that charge them with any of their stupid opinions; and they'll profess by all that's Sacred, they neither believe, nor practice any such things, as you lay to their charge. And yet you and I know most assuredly that they do in the very bottom of their Hearts so strongly adhere to them, that they would part with Life and all that's dearest to them, rather than forego them. But how come you and I to know they hold such and such absurd fancies, they so constantly professing they hold no such thing? Can any body know their minds and practices better than they themselves? That's a considerable Question, and shall be answered afterwards. Sure if this be their Case: That indeed, if they do not Worship and Pray to Pictures, and Stocks and Stones as Gods; nor believe any such extravagant power in their Holy Father at *Rome* to pardon or give leave to commit sin for Money, and a thousand other absurdities, which commonly they are charged with: And yet they will rather endure all losses of Estate, Liberty or Life, then relinquish the said detestable abominations, methinks they do not deserve so much to be persecuted, sequestred, imprison'd, hang'd drawn and quarter'd for Traytors, as to be pitied and cast into *Bedlam* for Mad Men, or to have their Estates begg'd for Natural Fools. There is some Mystery lies hid here, which we have not yet discovered. Either they are grossly and stupidly mistaken in

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matters of Religion, or else we are strangely mistaken in them, and what is indeed their Religion.

But for Gods sake, as you desire our Eternal Wellfare, which you seemed in the beginning of your discourse so heartily to pretend unto, of what Religion are you your self, who write thus for the satisfaction of your delusion Puritanical Kindred and Acquaintance, whom you so pity and compassionate? If you be neither *Puritan*, *Presbiterian*, *Protestant*, nor *Papist*, what are you? A *Jew*, *Turk*, or *Pagan*? No, I thank the All Good God I am a Christian; An *Apostolical Christian*. That is, one that believes whatever Doctrine can be proved to him, to have been taught the World by the Apostles of Jesus Christ: One that admits of any practice introduced into the World by the same Apostles: One that reverences all Books or Writings, as of an infallible Divine Authority left by them. Nay, if the Holy Apostles left any in Commission as their Successors, to make Ordinations observable by all Christians, I receive all Decrees of such Delegates of the Apostles also. But these are general terms, what do you believe in particular as to the Worship of God in this World, and the state of departed Souls in the other, and such like controverted points betwixt Papists and Protestants? Do you believe all those Papistical Doctrines you mentioned above or no? I thank my God, there's not one of them, which I do not detest as Hell it self. But what do you positively believe? I do believe whatsoever Jesus Christ taught his Twelve Apostles, and what his Twelve Apostles taught the World. And I do believe Almighty God has left us who live in this Seventeenth Age from our Dear Saviour, certain and infallible means to know what they taught the World in that first Age in which they lived; at least so much of what they taught and established as is needful for us to know and practice, to dispose us for Beatitude in the other life. For that otherwise the universal Redeemer should not have been a sufficient Saviour of all the World, but only of that part of it, which had the happiness to live in that first Age of Christianity, or at most only of such Ages as were so near that Primitive Happy Time, that they could certainly and infallibly know what Truths were taught, and what practices in order to the bettering, to the preparing of Mankind for Heaven, were set on foot by Jesus Christ, or his infallible Delegates, Substitutes or Witnesses.

But what means has Jesus Christ left us at this distance from the time wherein he illuminated the World by his Divine presence, to know how he lived, and how he taught his followers to live to come

to Eternal Life. Has he in some strange Island, preserved some Hundreds of Venerable Old Men, who have been kept alive ever since that first Age, to testify to all Generation, what kind of Doctrine they had heard with their Ears, or what kind of Worship they had seen with their Eyes, taught and established by the first Planters of Christianity? No, I know no such thing. Though this would have been a strange favour to the World, would the Almighty Creator have wrought such a Miracle in favour of Ignorant Man. But what then? Did Jesus Christ after the manner of *Moses* write a Book of all Christian Rites and Observances, or did he not at least command some one of his Twelve Apostles, or all of them together to write some such Book, so full, so compleat, so plain, as none that would not willingly mistake could possibly mis-understand it? Certainly he could not but foresee, what disputes would arise about observances of Days and Sacraments amongst Christians in future Ages. Why did he not tell us plainly by some Authentick Writing or other: His pleasure was, that all the *Mosaical* Rites and Observances of Days should be abolished, and instead of them he would have no Exterior Rites and Days at all; or else if he would have any, why did he not take care that some Book or other should be written, wherein every one that could read might see, how many Rites called Sacraments he would have to be used amongst Christians, and how and to whom, and by whom he would have them to be administered? Whether he would have certain days observed by Christians in memory of his Birth, Death, Resurrection and Ascension or no; any set days of Fasting, any distinction of Garments in Priests from the People or no? But himself to write never a Book to this purpose, nor any of his Apostles to write any thing but his Holy Life and Death four times over, and some little of the Life of some one or two of his Apostles, and a few occasional Letters of two or three of his Followers to particular Christians, whom they had fully instructed by word of mouth; what can we conclude from all this? But that surely Jesus Christ has left us some other means, than those written Books we have, fully to instruct us in the whole Counsel of God in Order to our Eternal Salvation. Indeed I find an Ancient Prophecy, that in the latter days God Almighty would write his Laws in his Peoples Hearts. Was this to intimate to us, that whosoever would find fully and clearly the Laws of Jesus Christ in the latter days, he must not so much consult written Books as the Hearts of Christians? And truly there is no other way without a miraculous Revelation by the Ministry of

of Angels, or some such means, for us who live now to know what was taught or practised sixteen hundred years before we were born, but only by Books written in that time or near that time, or else without Books by the oral Tradition of Fathers to their Children.

But what Certitude can there be in this? Could we speak with every Father and Son that has lived since the Apostles days, and should they tell us unanimously, that they had been taught to believe and practise thus and thus: For Example, to Baptize Children or not to Baptize them, to abstain from Flesh on *Fridays* or not to abstain in memory of our Lords bitter Death and Passion, and to humble our selves for our sins, and such like; no body could doubt of the truth of such a Testimony, more than he does mistrust his own Eyes or other Senses? But all the intervening Fathers and Sons 'twixt us and the first Age wherein our Lord Jesus lived, except only our Fathers and Grandfathers, being gone to another World; my Grandfather can tell me certainly what his Father taught him concerning Fasting on *Fridays*, Baptizing of Infants, Reverencing such a Book as of Divine Authority, written by a Holy Man called *Matthew* sixteen hundred years ago; but what assurance can he give me, that all his Progenitors have practis'd and believ'd after the same manner ever since the Apostles days? Why, what assurance could a *Jew* that lived in our Blessed Saviours time, have given to a Pagan, or to one of his own Children, that the Books of the Law of *Moses* were written by a Holy Man called *Moses*, who familiarly conversed with God, so many hundred years ago? He could only have discoursed to him after this manner. Thus I was told by my Father, and thus all our Neighbours were told by their Fathers, and 'tis impossible in any Age since our Great *Moses*, all our Ancestors should agree together to tell their Posterity so great a lye, to their own, and their Posterities Eternal damnation. One Man may tell an impudent notorious lye, but a whole Country cannot conspire in a lye which they know to be a lye; or could they, some neighbour Nation would tell the Cheat to Posterity. In like manner must the Apostolical Christian answer, when he is demanded an account, why he reveres such and such Books as Apostolical writings, or observes such and such Rites as Apostolical Ordinations. And this is the belief and practice of an Apostolical Christian in general. VVhatsoever this present Age, or any other Age since the Apostles time in several Nations and Countries, unanimously attest that they have received from their Forefathers from the Apostles, and he cannot positively show that

it was of a later date : begun for Example in or near such a time, by such and such, he submits to it as Apostolical ; and this though it cannot positively be proved, that, for Example, such a Book or Practice was received in every Age since the Apostles days, by positive Testimonies out of Authentick writings of every particular Age. And thus much satisfaction and no more could *Jaacob* have given to his Children; why he kept the Sabbath day, commanded by Almighty God to our first Parent *Adam* above two thousand years before. He had neither Scripture nor other Record of writing for any such Institution, the use of writing, being unknown to the world till afterwards, when God Almighty wrote the Ten Commandments in Two Tables of Stone. He could only tell them, thus he and his Neighbours had been immemorially taught to believe. And their objecting, how could they tell but some body out of a superstitious opinion of more Sanctity in every seventh day, than in every sixth or eighth, might have introduced the will-worship of such an Observation; such an Objection, I say, as this, would not have excused them before God from such an Obligation, which the whole present Generation told them they had observed immemorially from *Adam*. And indeed, though it were granted that according to the Holy Scriptures, we Christians are obliged to keep every first day of the week Holy, yet it cannot be proved out of Scripture or any other Book, or by any other Argument, but the immemorial tradition and practice of several Christian Countries, that the day we now observe is the true first day of the week, from that first first-day on which our Blessed Saviour rose from Death to Life. And yet that there should be Christians who should make no distinction betwixt *Friday* and the other days of the week ; though, go into all the Christian Countries of the world, and you'll not find one before *Luther*, but say they have immemorially from the time of the Apostles abstained from Flesh upon it in memory of our Blessed Saviours bitter Death and Passion. I fear ~~we~~ at the day of Judgment, their pleading they found no such command in all the New Scripture will be no sufficient excuse. If others fast not as they should do upon that day, must I therefore think I am excus'd from fasting upon it as I should? No more than I am excus'd from laying aside my worldly Affairs on *Sunday*, and spending it in Holy Exercises, because others profane it by drinking and disports. But this by the way only.

As to the satisfaction of that considerable Question Above, How we should know what the Papists believe and practice better than themselves, at least better than they will tell us what their belief and practice

practice is, as to praying to Images, buying Pardons and Licences to commit sin, &c. I must tell you plainly, I have lived above 20 years amongst them, and I could never yet meet with so much as one single person, that believ'd or practic'd any one of all those stupid absurdities I mentioned in my Description of a Papist; and the truth is, there is not one such Papist in England, nor any where else, but in Protestants Brains and false Imaginations. Nor do I desire any one should credit me as to this particular, nor the Adversaries of the *Roman Church* neither, but let him ask the first Papist he meets, whether he pray to Images or no; believe the Pope can give him leave to commit fornication for a piece of Money or no &c. And if the first Papist he meets with will acknowledge no such thing, let him propose the same questions to the next he meets, and so to others, until he find one: or if he can find none, let him not for Parasels in printed Books which he mis-understands, slander his innocent Neighbours. We easily mis-understand one anothers writings, but when we discourse together we explain our selves what we mean by such and such Expressions, which at the first hearing cause a wrong understanding in us. And I easily perswade my self would those of several Perswasions in our sadly divided Countrey, familiarly and friendly converse together, and ask an account of each others belief and practice, we should soon if not be of one mind, at least so far be of one Heart, that it would be far from us from thinking of persecuting one another to death for our differences in points of Religion. We suppose the *Roman-Catholicks* hold such and such absurdities, and then, here I can have you, and there I can have you, against the Wind-mills of our own Brains. Would Dr. *Stillingfleet* or others who write against the Church of *Rome*, when in some *Catholick* Author they meet with some Doctrine or Practice which shocks their understanding with its (as it seems to them) ridiculousness and absurdity, but reflect that there are great numbers of persons of sound judgment and Vertuous Lives, who believe and justify all Doctrines and Practices truly *Catholick*; methinks they could not but suspect; surely I either mis-understand this Author, or else its only his private opinion; and consequently he alone, and not the whole *Roman Church* ought to have dirt cast in her face for it; or or else they have some Reasons for such a belief or practice unknown to me; and therefore before I write against it, I'll consult some Romanist of judgment and understanding about it, who by word of mouth can more plainly declare the said Doctrine or Practice, and their

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their Reasons for it, if it be indeed owned and justified by their Church. Such candid sincere dealing as this would cut short many of our disputes, and strangely conduce to a happy compofure of all our differences. And indeed had we a deep fenfe of one anothers Eternal Happinefs and Mifery, and strong hearty defires of rightly informing one another in the direct paths to Eternal Bearitude, we would do fome fuch thing, rather than mifconftitue one anothers innocent fayings, and lye at the catch to make picquant re-parties upon each other, as we do.

But, my dear Relations, to give you an account of that ftrange and hardly credible, and yet moft certain truth, viz. *That you living amongst Papifts, and converfing daily with them, nay and often difcoursing with them about Religion too, yet do quite miftake their Religion, and do not at all underftand what they either believe or praftice as to their way of Worfhip, but imagine a thoufand fopperies and madneffes concerning them, which they no lefs than your felves abhor and deteft with their Hearts.* To give an account of this ftrange Paradox. Should an Englifhman tell a Turk at Conftantinople: Sir, I come out of a Countrey, where we are not all of one Religion, and for this caufe, the fupreme Magiftrates perfecute thofe of a different perfuafion from them, and all this meerly through a miftake, becaufe they mif-underftand one another. The perfecuting party fancies that thofe whom they perfecute hold the moft ftupid opinions in matters of Religion, that ever were held by Men: worfhip Stocks and Stones as Gods, pray to them, put their confidence in them, &c. think they can have leave from their Chief Prieft, whom they call their Pope, to commit any fin for money, &c. that is all the abfurdities I mentioned above; and yet notwithstanding not one Man of all the difcountenanced party, holds fo much as one of all the Abfurdities with which he is charged, but is ready by all that is Sacred to abjure them all in general, and every one in particular? What think you would a ftranger imagine, to whom fuch a Narration fhould be made? would he not Reply? Surely you do not fpeak all one and the fame Language, or elfe if you do, you feldom or never difcours with one another about matters of Religion; or elfe you are a ftrange blockifh people, who cannot underftand common fenfe; or elfe the difcountenanced party are Men of no Confcience, and therefore when you demand an account of them concerning their Religion, they make no fcruple to believe in their Hearts one thing, and to fwear to you they believe quite contrary: but then one would think they might abjure their whole

whole Religion; and conform Exteriorly to the Religion established, and so avoid the penalties of the Laws in force against them; or else the Ruling Power gains a considerable Revenue or some other notable advantage, by discountencing dissenters from them in matters of Religion. No. Pecuniary Mults as they are, through the favour of a Gracious Prince exacted, add nothing at all to the publick Treasury, and the whole force of the Nation is far less formidable to Externs, than otherwise it would be, were it not for our dis-union amongst our selves. What then is the true Reason, you neither can nor will understand one another? No body is malicious against his Neighbour, meerly because he will be so, when he is not only no gainer by his malice, but also prejudiced by it, which notwithstanding if I understand you aright, is the state of your Countrey. What must we say in this case to Gissie a stranger to our Affairs? Why, I would tell him the plain truth: That is, About a hundred and fifty years ago we were all of the present discountenanced parties Religion, but the Supreme Power thinking fit in many things to change, or as they phrased it, to reform the way of worship taught them by their Ancestors, partly aggravated real abuses, which stood in need of correction, and partly calumniated with a thousand lies those who would not joyn with them in their pretended Reformation, and those lyes have been propagated from Fathers to Sons ever since. Moreover there is a Real and very Considerable difference as to divers points, betwixt the Religion established by Law, and the Religion of dissenting Papists, as we call them: Especially about Transubstantiation, Invocation of Saints, and Purgatory. And now you know people of different persuasions, are very apt to slander and mis-understand one another, hoping thereby to make their own cause more plausible. Besides, those of the established Religion having the free use not only of the press, to write whatsoever they please concerning the discountenanced party, but also having the command of all the publick Pulpits, in which every week they represent their Adversaries how they please to the whole people, no body being permitted to gainsay or contradict them, nor even to write any thing but by stealth; and alterall, their Apologies for themselves come in of the hands but of a very few: And it being very unreasonable to persecute with loss of Estate or Life, good and peaceable Subjects purely for their Consciences in matters of Religion, and this about some nice Points only; the Ruling Party (or rather the first Reformers) to justify their own severe Laws against dissenters, are forced to slander them with

with a thousand lies before the vulgar Multitude, who easily believe what is told them by their Ministers, especially if they be such as they Reverence for their seeming learning and good life. Nor do I by what I am saying accuse the whole present Clergy of lying against their Consciences, when they tell the people that Papists pray to Stocks and Stones as Gods, can have pardon of sin past, or leave to commit sin to come for Money. No, I believe many of them do really think so in their Hearts, having been often told so from their Infancy, and knowing little of Papists but from printed Books, and these made by their Adversaries too. But the first Reformers who had been educated in Popery, could not but lye against their Consciences, when they told the people such lies concerning Papists as I have made mention of above. In like manner new Apostate Priests must needs have very bad Consciences, when they accuse, as they do, Papists of such things, as their own Consciences tell them, themselves were not guilty of when they were Papists. For Example, the Author of that Scurrilous Pamphlet, *The Rates of sins in the Custom-house of the Church of Rome*: What Conscience could he have? when he could not but fore-see that the common people would thence be confirmed in their mis-belief concerning their Catholick Neighbours, that they can have pardon and leave to commit any sin for Money, which in his Conscience he knew to be most false. And yet after all, one that had a mind to vilifie the Church of England, might with the like semblance of Truth, Intitle a Book, *The Rates of sins in the Custom-house of the Church of England*, and make good the Title by setting down the Pecuniary Mults which are exacted in Bishops Spiritual Courts for Adulteries, Fornications, Dispensations in Marriages, &c. as if in the Church of England, you might have leave to commit Adultery for so much, and Fornication for so much, &c. when all this while, these are only Pecuniary Punishments by which the Ecclesiastical Power discountenances, and endeavours to prevent sin and wickedness. And yet what hurt do such Paltry Pamphlets the simple half-witted Multitude? Jesus have Mercy on the Authors of them. But I am giving an account of our mis-understanding one another in matters of Religion. Add moreover, that Papists do practice certain things which those that are either very ignorant or very malicious may easily make a bad construction of. For Example they most commonly say their Prayers kneeling before some Picture of our Blessed Saviour, or his Holy Mother, or some other Saint; hence half-witted people that have often heard that Papists worship Images as Gods: do really

really think they pray to the Picture they kneel to God Almighty before. When if you saw their Hearts, or would believe their Tongues, they are as far from adoring such a Picture as God, as *Socrates* was from worshipping the Clouds, as the common people imagin'd, when they saw him bow his Body to the Creator of all in the open fields: And do no more pray to Pictures than you do to the bare walls, or Communion-Table set Altar-wise, you kneel before when you are at your Prayers. What you do to your Communion-Table, or to the Name of Jesus, that they do to the Picture of the same Jesus, and no more. And would you without passion and partiality converse with them, you would find what I say to be most true. To illustrate what I am saying, give me leave to insert a pleasant Story told me by a Protestant Lady. It seems in a Church in Town, certain Gentlemen (and these oftentimes but a quarter-pac'd Conformists, as the *Animadverter* upon *Naked Truth* phrases it) sit very near the Communion Table, or half-pac'd Popish Altar; now Thorough-pac'd Conforming Ladies entering the Church, show their respect towards the Holy Table, by making a low Reverential Court'sy: the Gentlemen that sit near the Superstitious Altar, taking all that respect as done to themselves, wonder much at it, and whisper to one another; Madam, Is that Lady of your Acquaintance? No. Nor of yours Madam? No. Surely she either knows, or thinks she knows some of us, she so civilly salutes us, &c. Madam; you mistake; 'Tis not to you, but to the Holy Eucharist, which is wont to be dispensed from the Sacred Table you sit so near; the Devout Lady gives all that respect. Just so fares it with the Religious Papist, who passing by the Image of his Dear Crucified Lord, Reverently pulls off his Hat, or Respectfully Bows his Head. The half-witted Protestant having been told from his Cradle that Papists worship Stocks and Stones as Gods, now believes the Papists to be Idolaters, not because his Minister told him so; but because he has, as he thinks, been an Eye-witness of their Idolatry; when all this while the Devout Romanist shows all this respect not to the Carved Wood or Stone, or painted Cloth or Paper he bows before, but to his great Lord Jesus in Heaven, represented by those Figures. Put all that has been said together, and you will see there is no great wonder in it, that the commonalty of our sadly divided Countrey should believe a thousand lies in matters of Religion, concerning their Catholick Neighbours, especially if you add that those who have been about 150 years slandering of them, have withall told the

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vulgar, that Catholicks are such a cunning and deceitful people, that you may not believe them in one word what they say to you concerning their Religion, but being ashamed of their Fopperies, they will deny them if you lay them to their charge: Or if at any time you meet with any whole candor and sincerity you are so convinced of, that you cannot think he would tell you a lye: Then you must imagine him to be of a particular belief and temper from all other Catholicks, and though he hold no such absurdities by reason of his better understanding, learning, &c. yet the generality of the people most certainly hold them all. O the craft and cunning of the Devil and deceitful Men, thus to blind and miserably impose upon the simple and well-meaning vulgar! Jesus of his Mercy open their Eyes, and make them see who they are that thus sadly delude and cheat them. Besides the Laws being very severe against Catholicks, many are afraid to have a better opinion of them than they are taught to have, though they even see they are much slandered, lest they should be convinced of the truth of their Religion, and then be obliged either to damn their Sou's if they would not embrace it, or loose their Estates and Preferments if they did embrace it. Finally, Catholick Religion is a Holy and Strict Religion, and therefore no wonder if the Professors of it be hated and ill spoke of by the wicked and loose world. Libertines willingly speak ill of those that are strict and very conscientious in their ways, but being ashamed to revile them for their Vertues, (though that be the real quarrel which they have with them) they mis-interpret their innocent and good Actions, and calumniate their persons with a thousand slanders. For Example. Catholick Religion teaches, that if any one have wronged his Neighbour by cheating, cozening or stealing any thing from him, he's bound if he be able under pain of damnation to make restitution, and without this no Tears, no Prayers, no Faith in the Blood of Christ can save him. The same Religion teaches also, that you are bound under pain of damnation to confess your most secret sins to a Priest, and that if you be truly penitent, and resolved to lead a new life, upon the Priests absolution on Earth you are most certainly pardoned in Heaven. It teaches also, that you have a like obligation to abstain from Flesh in Lent and upon other days of Abstinence, *Fridays, Vigils, &c.* Now Flesh and Blood does not like these Restraints. And hence those that have no mind either to make Restitution of ill gotten Goods, or to discover their shameful sins to a Priest, or to abstain from Flesh on certain days, and under-

derstanding that Priests when people confess to them, enjoyn them to make Restitution, and if they be not able to *satisfy*, enjoyn them oftentimes to give Alms in lieu of it, and in such cases dispense with the Ecclesiastical Law of Abstinence; this is ground enough to calumniate poor Papists, and to tell the simple Multitude, that they can buy pardon of their sins for Money, and have leave from their Priests to break any Law of God for Money, and let them commit what villanies they please, 'tis but confessing them to a Priest, and this without any repentance, or purpose of Amendment. *Misereor super turbam.* What Christian Heart would it not make to bleed to see how the well-meaning Multitude are abused and imposed upon by their deceived Guides?

My Dear Relations, For the love you have to your Immortal Souls, do your selves that right as but familiarly to converse with your Catholick Neighbours, and with as little passion as you can, do but ask them an account of their Religion, and do not against all common sense and reason, believe the Testimony of their Adversaries concerning them and their Religion, rather than them themselves, and if you do not find that you have been taught a thousand lies concerning them, and that they hold nothing nor practice nothing but what they are able to give a very satisfactory Account of to any impartial Enquirer, then say I am a Knave, a Lye, and a Chear, one that deserves no Mercy from God or Man, in this World or the next; but if you find what I have said to be most true, pray for those that have deceived you, and think seriously what it behoves you to do, and where you have not reason to suspect these Church-men, who stand in need of such notorious lies and slanders thereby to defend themselves against their Adversaries. If Popery be such a doltish and senseless Religion, then what need of belying it and slandering it to make it odious to the People? and what fear of its overspreading the Nation by a free and unlimited Toleration? But the truth is, it's a Holy, and most rational Religion, and such as Men must cease to be Men, or they cannot but acknowledge the Finger of God in it, when it is duly and truly represented as it is in it self, devoid of all those sopperies and lies with which it is calumniated by its Adversaries. For the love of God, what Papist in the world believes that the Gospel is but a Fable of Christ; that the Bishop of Rome is a God; Not any sin, but is or may be indulged amongst them, and scarce a known sin but there is a known price for it, and at their Marketplace you may commit them when you will, that they allow

Whoredom all the year long, and the practices of other uncleannesses not to be named among Men in some Months of the year; that mortal sins are put away by *Agnus Dei's*, by little parcels of the Gospel, by Popes and Bishops Pardons, &c. That Christ is the Saviour of Men only, but of no Women, for Women are saved by St. *Clare* and Mother *Jane*: That the Pope may check when he pleases the Epistles of St. *Paul*, and controul any thing avouched by all the Apostles: That we must simply believe the Church of *Rome*, whether it teach true or false; and if the Pope believe there is no life to come, we must believe it as an Article of our Faith? What Papist in the world believes one of all these Madnesses and Blasphemies? and yet the whole *Roman* Church is charged with them all, by no less a Man than the present Arch-Bishop of *York*; if that Book be his Grace's, which is commonly sold in *London* with his Name to it, and the Printers also, under the Title of a *Manul of Active Positive, and Oppositive Divinity*; written by him to preserve a Noble Lady from the danger of Popery. I confess a Protestant to whom I read a Dialogue in that *Manul* said, Surely some body to disgrace his Lordship had Printed it under his Name: But on the other side it is not credible that a Book should be publickly sold, all over *England*, for four years together, under so Great a Persons Name and yet be none of his, if there were any thing in it his. Lordship was ashamed to own. I well foresee what I have written will be ill taken by many, but I dare not but discharge my Conscience, and profess as in the sight of God, I write not thus to disgrace any Mans Person; but merely to dis-abuse my well-meaning Relations, who I am sure have such a Zeal of Godliness, and true Sanctity, that they would love Papists and their Holy and strict Religion with their Hearts, were not they and their Religion misrepresented unto them. To defame a particular Person is a great wickedness, but to slander a whole Church is a Detraction of a higher rank, and assuredly does oblige the Detractor to revoke his Calumnies, God be merciful to us; we have faults but too too many, what need of belying one another? Let us believe one another what we say our Tenets of Religion are, and dispute against those, and not against the uncharitable surmizes of our own Brains. To judge my Neighbours to be guilty of most horrid Blasphemies, when they protest they abhor them no less than my self, if this be not to judge my Neighbour, which is notwithstanding most severely prohibited me by my Blessed Saviour, I know not what is. Now for a Grave Doctor to accuse not some private Authors, but the whole *Roman* Church

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of all those Blasphemies and Absurdities, I but now mentioned, and yet not that so much as one single Papist you can meet with will own so much as one of them, I am at a stand what to think. Surely no Man could be so malicious to write such things on purpose to abuse a poor Lady; and on the other side to think that a Doctor of Divinity could be so ignorant of the Tenets of Papists, as to believe that no body can be a Papist, but he must necessarily believe the Pope is a God, that he may have leave to commit almost any sin at a known price when he will; that the Gospel is a Fable &c. Had he in plain terms told the good Lady, some Roman writers as he understood them, or as Protestants cited them, held such and such Absurdities and Blasphemies, but not one Papist she could meet with would own so much as one of them, this would have signified nothing to the retaining of her in the Protestant Communion. For the Reply would have been easie: Either you mis-understand the Authors, or else they are at most but the phrenses of some particular Men, and consequently I may be a Papist and hold none of them, but abominate and detest them all. But that he might be sure to preserve the Lady from the danger of Popery, under the disguise of a Dialogue, he makes a Papist give for Reasons why he cannot become Protestant, the Blasphemies and Absurdities above; which is as much as to tell her, if she will turn Papist such and so Blasphemous must her Faith and Religion be. Methinks knowing many of his Catholick Neighbours to be Men of good Judgment and honest Conversation, he should have demanded of them, whether such things were generally believed by them or no, before he had printed them as Reasons, why a Papist could not change his Religion: for if one may be a sound Papist and hold none of them, then all his Lordships discourse falls to the ground, whatsoever some particular Doctors may hold concerning them. Though that also be a meer calumny, and should any be so extravagant as to assert such Diabolical phrenses, he would be cast out of our Church as a Blasphemer.

And that you, *My Dear Relations*, may see that I have not at all wronged the Doctor, I have thought fit to transcribe some few Lines out of his 7th. Chap. Page 101. The next to his Dialogue. *The foregoing Sixth Chapter*, says he, *gives an account of some of the Blasphemies and Abominations of the Roman Church, many more might be instanced, &c.* Where in plain terms, as before under the disguise of a Dialogue, he charges not barely some particular Authors, but the whole Roman Church, and all Roman Catholicks with the Blasphemies.

mies in the foregoing Dialogue. He goes on; *Where is their Piety towards God, while they affirm that the Gospel is but a Fable of Christ, &c. Nay even that the Bishop of Rome is a God, &c. Where is their Sobriety and Chastity, while they Authorize Stews, allow Whoredom all the year long, &c. Scarce a known sin but there is a known price for it; and at their Market-rate you may commit them when you will, &c.* Such extravagant Discourses though they may hinder some from ever examining the Catholick Religion, yet they are oftentimes, God Almighty out-shooting the Devil in his own Bow, happy occasions of the Conversions of others. I remember to have read of a German Count, who reflecting how divers of his Catholick Neighbours were Persons of a very sound Judgment and Understanding, he began to think with himself, how they could believe such strange Doctrines, as were by his Ministers commonly laid to their charge, hereupon he resolved to inquire into their Tenets, and he found for a great part they held no such Doctrines as they were commonly taxed with, and as for what they did indeed hold, they had very good Reasons for their Faith. And so by the merciful Grace of God became a happy Convert to that Religion, the which before he impartially examined it, seem'd so exotic and incredible unto him. Which I hope, *My Dear Relations*, will one day be your happy lot also. Take but pains candidly and diligently to inquire and I doubt not but it will. But if you will needs go on to think your Catholick Neighbours to be such Monsters of Men, and to hold such horrid Blasphemies and Absurdities, which they profess no less to abhor and detest than your selves, I hope I have done the duty of a Christian Kinsman, and to my grief must one day bear witness against you, that I told you how grossly you misapprehended the True Worshipers of Christ, but you would neither believe me, nor seriously use any means to inform your selves aright. But I hope better things concerning you.

Another great cause of all your mistakes is the scandalous lives of too too many *Roman* Catholicks. For the truth is, no Catholicks believe so much as one of the above-mentioned Absurdities, yet many of them (Christ Jesus mend us all) live so as they may seem to a prejudiced beholder, to believe divers of them. Considering their Mock-prayers, Mock-fasts, and Mock-confessions without any Amendment of life, &c. But to help you against this, you must remember the Counsel of St. *Augustin* to cast your Eyes not only upon the Cockle, but also upon the good Wheat, and if you will needs be comparing the Professors of our several Religions together, do not

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compare the best of your own Religion with the worst of ours, but the best of ours with the best of your own, and the worst of ours with the worst of your own; and do not consider how little our Fasting-days, or Holy-days, or Confession of sins, &c. conduce to Piety as they are observed by the Libertines of our Church, but what helps they would be to make all the world better, were they observed in a due and Christian manner. Another great cause of your mistakes is, that great Lye devised by the first Reformers, viz. That the New Testament is a Compleat Rule of Faith and Manners for all Christians. Hence whatsoever Practice or Ceremony you cannot find there, you reject it as a Superstition and Will-worship. And this makes you quarrel with all Abstinence from certain kinds of Meats on Fasting-days, and with all Holy-days except *Sundays*, with the Sign of the Cross, &c. Whereas Christian Doctrines and the Evangelical way of Worship were first taught the world by the Apostles before they writ anything at all. Nor did ever any of the Apostles or all of them together go about to write a Book of the whole Body of the Christian Law, like to those of *Exodus* and *Leviticus* writren by *Moses*, as is manifest to any one that considers the Nature of the Books of the New Testament. The four Gospels are a History of our Blessed Saviours Life and Death, who lived as to the External Rites of Religion according to the *Jewish* Law, and so we cannot reasonably in any of them expect, what Holy-days or Fasting days or Ceremonial Rites we Christians are to observe in the time of the Gospel. Indeed had the Acts of the Apostles been intended as an exact Narration how the Apostles lived as to the whole course of their life, what days they kept Holy, and what they fasted, and how; and what Sacraments they administered, and now, and with what Rites, &c. we might reasonably have expected there some mention of *Ascension* and *Christmas-day*, of *Lent* and Abstinence from Flesh on *Fridays*, of Reneuncing the Devil, and the Sign of the Cross in Baptism, &c. But that Holy Book making mention only, of some few particular passages, of two or three of the Apostles lives, the Apostles might well keep divers Holy-days besides *Sunday*, and abstain from Flesh in *Lent* and upon other Fasting-days, and use the Sign of the Cross, &c. and teach the same also to their first Converts, and yet there be a profound silence of them in the Book of their Acts. As for *St. Johns* Prophetical Book, it looks nothing like a Ritual, or an Account of what days and Rites in the Divine Worship are peculiar to us Christians. The rest of the New Testament are Epistles, or Letters of Spiritual

Spiritual Counsel, written by St. *Paul* or some other Apostle to Persons already instructed in the Christian way of Worship. And why they should make mention therein of all Christian Exterior Rites and Days, I understand not, unless perchance the Persons they wrote unto had been deficient in such Observances.

The Adequate Rule of our Faith and Manners are the Doctrines and Practices taught the World by the Apostles of our Blessed Saviour. And the Holy Scriptures are an Excellent, but not the only means whereby we may assuredly come to know what Truths were taught, and what Practices were set on foot over the whole Earth by the same Apostles. We must consult the immemorial Faith and Practices, and unanimous attestations of several Christian Countries, and what they joyfully witness immemorally to have received from Father to Son from the Apostles, whether it be a Book written, as they tell us, by the Apostles, or a Doctrine taught by them, or a Ritual Observance ordained by them, we safely submit unto it as Apostolical. For that the several Christian Inhabitants all over the World could never possibly meet together to forge a lye. And it is no small cause, *My Dear Friends*, of all your mistakes, that you conceit you know the Holy Scriptures to be the infallible Word of God by their own light. There's no doubt but any one that reverently reads those Holy Books cannot but acknowledge that there are very many Excellent Truths declared in them, but that every thing in them is infallibly true, and that they were written by Men un-erringly inspired by the Holy Ghost, it's not possible we should ever have come to know so much, but by the teaching of our Parents, who from our Infancy imprinted upon us a Reverence to those Sacred Writings above all others. And did we but reflect that the assurance we have that the Books of the New Testament were written by Apostolical Persons, is only this, that so all Christian Countries since the Apostles have immemorally believed, our Discourse would strait tell us, there's all reason we should ask of those several Countries from whom we have received those Divine Books, in what sense they have been always taught to understand them? and interpret them accordingly; and what Rites and Observances they received together with them? and admit them with the like Reverence. And it will be hard to give an Account to our Blessed Saviour, why with such awful dread you submitted to the four Gospels or Epistles of St. *Paul* as most Sacred and Divine, and yet dared to reject as superstition and Will-worship certain Practices and Observances delivered to you by the same Hands

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immemorially from the Apostles. Mistrust not the Providence of our Dear Redeemer, he has in all Ages had a Warchful Eye over his Holy Church, not permitting her to Apostatize by Idolatry, or be defiled with Superstition, or to deliver to posterity her own Inventions, for Apostolical Traditions. But more of this hereafter. Till you hear further from me, my Dearest Friends, let me only obtain this favour of you, to do your selves this right, to converse familiarly with Roman Catholicks, and to hear impartially what they have to say for themselves wherein they differ from you, and not to fancy they believe a thousand Absurdities, which they no less desire than your selves.

Yours ever.

W. H.

F I N I S.
